

# Cook County Advocate

2006 • Vol. 2

News for Chicago Metro Area Families

## Cook County Early Childhood resources

STAR NET workshops, resources, technical assistance network and other programs are targeted at parents and guardians of young children with special needs and education professionals. Family fellowships allow parents of children with disabilities the opportunity to be reimbursed for educational expenses of up to \$200.00 annually.

To view a list of workshops or to find resources, contact the Star Net region for the Chicago Public Schools or for the South Suburban Cook County area as shown below.

### STAR NET Region V

Office of Specialized Services - Resource Network  
Colman School - Mail Run #42  
4655 South Dearborn (Room 204) Chicago, Illinois 60609;  
Phone: 773-535-8607; Fax: 773-535-8610; web site: [http://www.oism.cps.k12.il.us/dept\\_oss\\_starnet.shtml](http://www.oism.cps.k12.il.us/dept_oss_starnet.shtml).

### STAR NET Region VI

South Suburban Cook County  
6020 W. 151st Street, Oak Forest, IL 60452; Phone: 708-342-5370; Fax: 708-687-2247; web site: [www.swccase.org/StarNet/](http://www.swccase.org/StarNet/).

## Summer camp options for Cook

The DCFS Project S.O.A.R. has arranged with the Chicago Park District and several suburban camps in Cook County to provide day camp for children in foster care and children with open intact family cases. Children ages 6 to 12 are eligible. DCFS has already identified eligible youth in placement and will contact caregivers with instructions on how to register for programs.

Caregivers who would like to register their children for one of the funded programs should take forms provided by DCFS with them when they go to register at the park program of their choice. The form confirms that the registration fee will be paid by DCFS. Transportation costs are not covered.

The Chicago Park District has day programs running all summer in parks across the city. Before and after care is available in many sites. Registration begins April 22 and continues through the first week of camp. See [www.chicagoparkdistrict.com](http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com) for more details.

The Department is also working with several suburban camps in Cook County. Potential suburban



program locations include: Harvey, Hazel Crest, Maywood Park, Bellwood, Country Club Hills, Homewood and Flossmoor. These programs will be funded for DCFS youth. However, transportation costs, if applicable, are not included.

For more information on day camp, contact the Office of Service Intervention at 312-814-5959.

## City of Chicago KidStart helps youth find summer jobs

The KidStart Summer Jobs program is a way for youth ages 14 to 21 to start building a job history, learn new skills and earn money during the summer. KidStart provides summer employment and pre-internships, introduces young people to the world of work and creates relationships with mentors for a positive employment experience.

KidStart Summer Jobs offers diverse opportunities from painting murals in public spaces to fixing computers. Public agencies, such as the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Park District and the Chicago Department of Children and Youth Services, offer summer employment in the public sector and at local community based organizations.

The Corporate Initiative provides summer jobs in private businesses across the City. This year, the City has partnered with the Rotary Clubs of Chicago to double the number of jobs offered and provide professional mentorship for Corporate Initiative youth.

For 14 and 15 year olds, work-force-training programs offer pre-internships where young

people are educated in appropriate workplace behavior. Participants receive a stipend for completing pre-internships.

Applicants to the KidStart Summer Jobs must:

- Be between the ages of 14 to 21.
- Be residents of the City of Chicago.
- Apply using the standard KidStart application.
- Provide parental/guardian signature if the applicant is under the age of 18 at the time of application.
- Undergo a prescreening and interview process.

Applicants who are selected to interview for a position are chosen based on their qualifications and on how well their applications match the stated needs of employers. The purpose of the program is to provide the best possible match between applicants and employers. Applicants will receive a phone call by June 27 to inform them of job opportunities.

Once applicants are selected they will receive a call from an Account Executive who will inform them of the next steps. In most cases,



an in-person interview is required. Applicants will complete an employer's normal hiring process. Those applicants who are matched with a private business must complete a two-day Job Readiness and Training Session sponsored by the Chicago Department of Children and Youth Services.

A trained Account Executive, who is responsible for matching the applicant to their positions, will continue to work with the young employee as a liaison to the employer. After they start working, they are also provided a mentor from the Rotary Clubs of Chicago who will guide the participant as they navigate career ideas and professional growth.

The KidStart web site [www.chicagokidstart.org](http://www.chicagokidstart.org) has much more information on the program and the application materials. Or call the hotline at 773-553-JOBS (5627).

Register now for the 2006 Caregiver Training Institute. This year's theme is ***Effecting Transitions for Youth in Care - Resources for Caregivers and Youth***. Caregivers will earn training hours as they learn about new DCFS programs, avenues for positive involvement in decision-making and resources to prepare youth for self-sufficiency.

**Call the toll-free registration number 877-800-3393 to register for the last session in Cook County • May 6 • 8:30 to 3:00 p.m. • 1911 S. Indiana Ave. Chicago**

## Cook County jobs

There are many employment avenues for youth living in Cook County. The DCFS booklet *Youth Employment and Training Programs* outlines many local and statewide programs, including:

### Added Chance Program

An employment program for DCFS youth ages 16-20 who live in Cook County. Contact Doreen Sorenson at 773-342-4243.

### Hire the Future

A statewide program of the IL Department of Employment Security. Students work in manufacturing, financial, transportation, trade and service industries. Contact Denise Coleman at 312-793-1289.

### IL Employment and Training Centers

These service centers comprise a statewide network to help job seekers with pre-employment training and job placement. To find the nearest service center, call 888-FOR-IETC and ask to speak to the coordinator for youth employment.

### Job Corps

This national program has offices in Chicago, Joliet and Golconda. Job Corps provides education and training for students ages 17-24. Students can learn a trade, get a high school diploma or GED and receive help getting a job. Call 800-230-JOBS for more information.

The DCFS Education and Transition Managers are available to help. Call 312-814-5959.

## The resume is an important first step toward finding the right job

Most employers will require an applicant to submit a resume when applying for a job. A resume is not an application. Instead, your resume is like a picture of who you are and what you have done. A resume gives the person who reads it a quick and general idea of the applicant's accomplishments and is designed to convince a potential employer to meet for an interview.

Here's a list of information to always include in a resume:

### Personal data

- Your full first and last name in capital letters. Leave out any nicknames.
- Your full address. Do not abbreviate street, avenue or state. In general, avoid abbreviations throughout your resume.
- Both your home phone number and a phone number where messages can be left if you don't have an answering machine.

### Job objective

Give a brief explanation of the type of work for which you are looking. Make sure your objective (or goal) matches in some way the job for which you are applying.

### Education

List schools attended, the type of program, areas of concentration

<p>YOUR FULL NAME Your home address Your city, state and zip code Your area code and telephone number</p> <p>JOB OBJECTIVE: Use one or two straightforward sentences that describe what you are looking for in your job search.</p> <p>EDUCATION: List name, address and dates of attendance of current school. Include type of degree or anticipated degree, major, date or anticipated date of graduation, major courses of study. List name, address and dates of attendance of previous school(s). If you are currently in college, include information about your high school; if you are currently in high school, include information about elementary school.</p> <p>WORK EXPERIENCE: List name, address and dates of employment of your current or most recent employer. Include position and/or job title and briefly list responsibilities. List name, address and dates of employment of previous employer(s). Include position and/or job title and briefly list responsibilities.</p> <p>SPECIAL SKILLS: Use this section to your advantage. Include such things as languages spoken, sports, extra-curricular activities, and volunteer work.</p>
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and years of completion in reverse chronological order (from most to least recent). Include all awards, certificates, diplomas and degrees received.

### Work experience

Supply company name, city and state and dates of employment for each past job, listing these in reverse chronological order.

### Special skills

Include all the special skills and abilities you have. Try to relate all your skills to your job objective as much as possible.

For more tips and examples, check out the resources on the KidStart web site: [www.chicagokidstart.org](http://www.chicagokidstart.org). Also, Microsoft Word users can get a head start from the resume templates and wizards included in the software.



## Chicago Public School reminders for caregivers

### Report Card Pick Up

Caregivers can pick up student report cards and discuss progress with teachers on Wednesday, April 19 for elementary school students and Thursday, April 20 for high school students. Foster parents should coordinate with caseworkers on the teacher conference to be sure information is shared.

### Days off

- Spring Vacation: School closes at the end of the school day on Thursday, April 6, 2006 and will reopen on Monday, April 17, 2006.
- Memorial Day: Monday, May 29

### Test Dates

Chicago Public Schools will administer the Stanford Learning First Assessment April 25, 2006 to May 10, 2006 to all students in grades 3-8, who were required to take the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). Teachers will receive test results within two weeks. This will allow teachers to ensure that each youth's individual academic needs are met and that their progress is being monitored. Caregivers should speak with teachers about the results and any recommendations for improvements.

## DCFS Participates and Sponsors Dia del Niño (Day of the Child) Family Festival

Dia del Niño (Day of the Child) Family Festival is a free, day long festival that focuses on culture, health, fitness and nutrition. Last year, more than 10,000 people (80 percent Latino) came together for fun and important information. This year, the 10<sup>th</sup> annual celebration will be held Saturday, April 8, 2006 at the UIC Pavilion, located 525 S. Racine, Chicago, IL from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

The festival promises to offer fun activities like art, interactive games, raffles and dancing for kids; wellness testing, health screenings, child abuse prevention and awareness education and fitness activities for adults; plus dance, musical performances and much more for people of all ages. The event is free and welcomes all cultures to celebrate the day of the child.



Wear comfortable shoes and attire because the festival will kick-off at 10 a.m. with a (casual) 2.5 mile Health Walk and Parade from the Mexican Fine Arts Museum, located 1852 W. 19<sup>th</sup> Street in Chicago to the UIC Pavilion. For those who choose to skip the Health Walk, a trolley has been conveniently reserved to transport all seniors, disabled and small children to and from the UIC Pavilion.

Upon arrival, participants will receive information on all the day's festivities. There will be lots of giveaways to include in a goody bag on the way out.

For more information, contact the Mexican Fine Arts Museum at 312-738-1503 or Delores Robinson, DCFS Community Relations at 312-814-6852.

## Life Skills Training prepares youth

Even though most teens might think they are ready for life on their own right now, many could use some extra preparation and instruction. The Office of Education and Transition Services provides Life Skills Training for all youth ages 14 to 21, while they are in DCFS care. In Cook County, currently four providers have contracts for 12-week sessions to teach youth about topics such as money management, conflict resolution, health and safety in the home, and nutrition.



Ken Broady

“It is important that the foster parents encourage young people to take advantage of these classes. These critical skills are a necessity for life as an adult, plus the youth enjoy the time with other young people,” said Ken Broady, Transition Manager.

At Rights of Passage, youth learn about universal cultural values as they develop life skills. For example, “ujamaa” the Swahili word for cooperative economics is the framework for learning money management, from computations to balancing a bank account.

The approach and activities may differ among providers, but the goal to help youth mature and become self-sufficient is the same

no matter who is providing the service. Additionally, the Education and Transition Services staff are actively recruiting more providers to serve more areas of Chicago and the Cook suburbs.

The providers currently have openings so youth can get started quickly. It is actually better to do the training sooner rather than wait. To begin the life skills training, a youth must participate in the Ansell-Casey life skills assessment and have it scored with a caseworker. The foster parent also provides input to the assessment to help identify a youth’s current strengths and needs. Assessments are typically done at age 14 and 16, and before closing a youth’s case. The assessment will be the basis of the service plan and selection of the right setting and type of life skills training for each participant. The caseworker must submit the assessment and other documentation to the Education and Transition Services office. Then the youth will be connected to an appropriate provider.

Many agencies provide assistance with transportation if it is needed and provide snacks for each class. To find a life skills program suitable for a youth in care, contact the Transition Manager Ken Broady at 312-814-5567.

## Cook Central has new Transition Manager

The DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services (OETS) offers a variety of programs for older youth to assist them in receiving educational, employment and training opportunities as they prepare for self-sufficiency and independence. To help the caregivers and caseworkers support youth as they move forward, Transition Managers are available for consultation in local DCFS offices.

Ken Broady is the new Transition Manager for Cook Central Region. He will be at the 3518 W. Division office on Tuesdays. At other times he can be reached at 312-814-5567.

Broady can assist caregivers and staff with transition programs including:

- DCFS Scholarship Program
- Youth in College Program
- Employment Incentive Program
- Youth Housing Assistance Program

Youth who are attending college can access the Education Training Voucher and Illinois Community College Board Tuition Payment program to help pay for educational expenses at Illinois schools.

Caregivers can contact Broady for more information on transition services and programs.

## Lead Support Specialist retires

Eleanor Short, Lead Foster Parent Support Specialist who dedicated her life to serving families, is now embracing retirement after more than 20 years with the Department. She started as a Foster Parent Advocate for the Cook South Region in Chicago. In time, she became a Lead Advocate, supervising six individuals of the team serving the South suburbs.

Short's professional success as a support specialist stemmed from her personal successes as a wife and mother. Short has fostered over one hundred children. She first started off as an emergency foster parent for infants and toddlers. She said it was a great joy having the children in her home, and watching them grow.

Short would like to say to all the staff that it was a great pleasure working with them. She believes the biggest "difference-maker" for families are enrichment programs in dance and art. Programs like that "give the children an avenue to outlets beyond foster care and give the foster parents assurance that children would be able to redirect their energy into something more positive."

At this time Support Specialists Carole Lukacek and Ida Lopez will be filling in the gap temporarily. Lukacek can be reached at 708-210-2833.

## From the Cook South RA, Michael Byrd



Michael Byrd

DCFS is facing new challenges that require new approaches to meet the new needs of today's families. It almost makes you wish for the good old days when families helped each other learn how to make it. Family bonds were formed with a piece of Aunt Bessie's experience, knitted to Big Momma Esther's opinions, which was pinned right next to cousin Clyde's know-how. Those tight bonds sometimes break in today's society, but in Cook South we are learning from each other how to build better families so children can have better outcomes.

For example, the Family to Family Initiative is giving foster parents a model for working with birth families and the child welfare team to 1) decrease the length of stay in placement; 2) increase the rate of children reunified in viable birth families; and 3) reduce the number of youth served in institutional settings. This approach means that, in many cases, the foster parent will work cooperatively with birth parents on behalf of the child. A new DCFS program, Integrated Assessment, can support that concept. By doing intense evaluations of the family's situation as the case opens, workers and caregivers will have a more complete and a more timely picture of the strengths

and the needs that come into play for the particular child and family.

We can also learn from each other through two important councils that I encourage all caregivers to consider. The Cook South Foster Parent Advisory Council tackles issues and concerns that foster parents see first hand. The regional advisory council is a starting point for issues that need to go to the Statewide council. The Cook South council meets the third Wednesday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon at 6201 S. Emerald. Looking at policy and giving your perspective on how it affects your children and the work you do makes this an invaluable outlet.

You can also tell us about the work we do at the Regional Quality Councils. Supervisors, field service managers, workers and myself meet with community stakeholders to take a pulse on how we are performing. We need more input from you, our "consumer" on your level of satisfaction with how foster parents and children are being served. These meetings help promote continuity of services, build better relationships, and keep the communication lines open. On the last Wednesday of the month at 9 a.m. in the Emerald Office, we are available for questions, complaints, concerns or even compliments.



## Cook South Support Groups flourish

The leadership in Cook South wants foster parents to have the information, training and support that will meet their needs. Staff encourages foster parents to come out and ask questions, share their experiences and join the region in supporting caregivers and the children and families.

Cook South Region continues to have Foster Parent Support Group meetings at both the Emerald and Harvey Offices. Both meetings are held from 10 a.m. to noon. We welcome and encourage foster parents to attend the group meeting that best fits your schedule. Each meeting is open to both DCFS and private agency foster parents who are located in the Cook South area. Foster parents are encouraged to attend and bring another foster parent or prospective foster parent. Visitors from other regions are also welcome. Credits toward re-licensure are available through attendance and participation in the support group meetings.

### Upcoming topics at 6201 S. Emerald:

Emerald meets on the second Tuesday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon.

- April 11: Serving Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Youth Training

### Upcoming at the Harvey (Family to Family Initiative)

Harvey meets on the fourth Thursday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon

- April 28: How to protect your child from sexual predators on the Internet or the Neighborhood.

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For foster parents who are not available in the day, evening support group meetings have been made available through collaboration with Metropolitan Family Services (MFS). These meetings occur from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays of every month at MFS 235 W 103<sup>rd</sup> Street. For additional information, contact Rosie Starks (773-371-3651) or Pat Thompson (773-371-3662) at Metropolitan Family Services.

Foster Parent inquires and concerns for the Cook South Region can be directed to the dedicated **Foster Parent Support and Information line at 773-371-6113.**

Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS) have been assigned to respond to this line on a regular basis.

## South City Association sets active agenda

The South City Foster Parent Association has been meeting for over 30 years. The group meets every second Thursday of the month, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Emerald office. The active agenda includes guest speakers that come to discuss issues such as DCFS policy, post-adoption concerns and family/child stabilization services. The members also plan and enjoy four social events each year. Two events are with the children and the other two social events were “mommy getaways.”

“This association always provides fun activities for our kids and for their families. I like it because we are very welcoming and enjoy supporting each other,” said Carole Lukacek, longtime association member.

After three decades, the families have come to appreciate the lasting bonds of support from one another through shared struggles and triumphs. Adoptive, guardianship and foster families on the South Side of Chicago and in the South suburbs are welcome to join this group. Yearly dues are \$100 per family to cover expenses for the social outings. However, individuals who are not members can also participate in the meetings to interact with other families. Contact Linda Freeman 708-849-8663 for more details.

# Cook County Training Calendar

## FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

### COOK CENTRAL

#### Module 1 - Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk

(Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

**CHICAGO** *Hephzibah*  
May 6 & 13 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

#### Module 4 - The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Sexual Abuse

(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**CHICAGO** *LCFS*  
April 18, 20 & 25 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

### COOK NORTH

#### Module 5 - Supporting Relationships Between Children and their Families

(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**CHICAGO** *Volunteers of America*  
April 15 (Sat) and 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
April 22 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

### COOK SOUTH

#### Module 2 - Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs

(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**CHICAGO** *Aunt Martha's*  
April 18, 20 & 25 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

**CHICAGO** *Hull House*  
May 15, 17 & 22 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.  
(Mon/Wed)

**CHICAGO** *Lutheran Social Serv.*  
April 3, 5 & 10 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

#### Module 4 - The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Sexual Abuse

(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**CHICAGO** *Aunt Martha's*  
June 20, 22 & 27 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

**CHICAGO** *DCFS, 6201 S. Emerald*  
June 17 & 24 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
(SPANISH) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

#### Module 5 - Supporting Relationships Between Children and their Families

(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**CHICAGO** *Hull House*  
April 17, 19 & 24 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.  
(Mon/Wed)

#### Module 7 - Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity

(Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

**CHICAGO** *Aunt Martha's*  
May 15 & 17 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

## Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six-hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

### COOK NORTH

**CHICAGO** *Irish American Center*  
June 3 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

**CHICAGO** *Volunteers of America*  
May 6 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

### COOK CENTRAL

**OAK PARK** *Hephzibah*  
April 22 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
June 10 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

### COOK SOUTH

**CHICAGO** *DCFS, 6201 S. Emerald*  
June 10 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

**CHICAGO** *FORUM*  
May 2 & 4 (Tue/Thu) 6-9 p.m.

**HARVEY** *DCFS Office*  
April 18 & 20 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.  
May 22 & 24 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

**MATTESON** *Illinois Mentor*  
May 13 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

## Cook County Advocate reporters

### Cook North ~ Sari Rowitz

312-328-2484 office  
312-328-2688 fax  
SRowitz@idcfs.state.il.us  
1911 S. Indiana Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60616

### Cook Central

773-292-7700 office  
773-292-7861 fax  
3518 W. Division  
Chicago, IL 60651

### Cook South ~ Bobby Evans

773-371-6146 office  
773-371-6065 fax  
BEvans@idcfs.state.il.us  
6201 S. Emerald  
Chicago, IL 60621

Anyone can call the regional reporter with foster parent association news and schedules; local training notices; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.

All classes are coordinated by Harold Washington College in Chicago.

Call 312-553-5821 or -3031 to register.